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Fall 2010

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Imagining America

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# ia news

STRENGTHENING THE DEMOCRATIC PURPOSES OF THE HUMANITIES, ARTS, AND DESIGN

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*Imagining*  
**America**  
*Artists and Scholars in Public Life*

## Imagining Jamaica

**Kevin Bott**

Imagining America congratulates longtime friend, consortium representative for Lafayette College, and National Advisory Board member, Dr. Gladstone “Fluney” Hutchinson, on his recent appointment by the Jamaican Government to serve as director-general of the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ). The PIOJ is the agency chiefly responsible for initiating and coordinating policy and programming related to the nation’s economic, cultural, social, and physical development. Hutchinson and his staff are charged with realizing the aims of Jamaica’s long-term development plan, Vision 2030 Jamaica.

Hutchinson is on leave from Lafayette College, where he is associate professor of economics and founding director of the Economic Empowerment and Global Learning Project. Between 2001 and 2006, he served as dean of studies at the College and heavily incorporated Imagining America themes and learning paradigms in first-year orientation programs. Discussing his decision to accept the government post, Hutchinson, a Jamaican national, emphasized the important role Imagining America played in preparing him for such a position.

I had the chance to speak to “Fluney” by phone as he was changing planes on his way back to Jamaica from attending meetings in Washington, D.C. He began by explaining how his relationship with IA began:

**Fluney Hutchinson:** Between 1996 and 1998, I worked as an economic advisor to Jamaica. It was during this time that I realized the gap between the science of economics and the approaches and answers to the questions about well-being and freedoms that people grapple with in their everyday lives. In other

words, I was trying to address peoples’ aspirations for renewal, revitalization, and development, but I was limited by seeing things only through the lens of the values created in market transaction. I began to appreciate that a more holistic interpretation was necessary, and that the public humanities had to interface with economics and other disciplines if we were to see past entrenched thoughts and imagine our way into a better understanding and framing of the societal challenges we’re facing. My first

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**FROM THE DIRECTOR**

## Interdisciplinarity and Engagement

**Jan Cohen-Cruz**



The focus of this issue of the newsletter is IA’s interdisciplinary identity. Beginning our second decade, the National Advisory Board was recently rethinking the language we use to describe the primacy of the arts, humanities, and design in IA’s mission, even as many of our members are committed to projects that extend beyond those fields. Our Tenure Team Initiative attests to the relevance of our findings in and beyond the arts, humanities, and design; our vision of contributing to the transformation of higher education as a whole requires that we consider more than the cultural disciplines. This dual emphasis creates tensions, especially for humanists and artists who already feel marginalized in the academy.

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## Bridging Disciplines, Crossing Sectors

**Jamie Haft**

Interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral collaborations are often generated in response to the urgency of finding solutions to intractable community problems. In contrast to last fall's tenth anniversary newsletter where we featured long-time IA consortium members, this fall we are delighted to feature a number of our newest member campuses: Fordham University; California State Polytechnic University, Pomona; University of New Mexico; and North Carolina State University. Many scholars on these campuses are working in interdisciplinary ways, complicating and enriching IA's purview of humanities, arts, and design.

### FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

There's a significant service-learning presence at Fordham, which Professor Mark Naison traces to its Catholic tradition and location in the Bronx: "My mentor at Fordham was the great Jesuit sociologist, Father Joseph Fitzpatrick, who not only pioneered the study of Puerto Rican life in New York City, but participated in parishes that served Puerto Rican neighborhoods and aided community organizations that worked in those communities. He showed that being a great scholar and a community advocate were not incompatible roles." Both Naison and his IA Consortium co-representative, Glenn Hendler, are interested in connecting service-learning with scholarship, and linking Fordham's existing interdisciplinary public scholarship efforts to regional and national networks.

Hendler is the director of the American Studies program and an English professor. With academic training in semiotics, comparative literature and theory, and cultural studies, he's always been interdisciplinary.

"I have never felt comfortable constrained in a discipline," Hendler says. "I've tried to keep one foot in the English department and one foot out. Having one foot out of your

home discipline enriches the discipline, and it makes you ask better questions about what you're studying."

Hendler is working to get the American Studies program involved in more community partnerships. Current students participate in volunteer activities, community organizing, and activism around issues like tenants' rights, community gardens, and pollution.

"I'm always amazed at how much beyond the university my students are doing," he notes. "I'm sure they're making some connections when they are in the classroom, but I think we can do more as an institution."

According to Hendler, American Studies and other interdisciplinary programs are well suited to help students understand the issues they're facing in communities. American Studies has a long tradition of combining history with an understanding of how cultures interact, which could be useful for a student working in various communities to address an environmental issue.

"I come out of literature, but advise more students doing political, sociological, and

anthropological work that is excluded by a narrow notion of humanities. For decades, scholars in the non-quantitative wing in the social sciences have found a home in American Studies, so maybe this interdisciplinary experience can be useful."

Naison, department chair and professor of African and African American Studies, has spent 40 years in a multidisciplinary department and in partnerships with schools, community organizations, and cultural institutions in the Bronx.

"The most exciting work that goes on at Fordham often takes place in interdisciplinary entities," Naison adjoins. "As far as I'm concerned, the interdisciplinary work within the university and the community collaborations with surrounding neighborhoods are the most promising avenues for higher education in the US today."

Naison started the Bronx African American History Project, a community-based oral history project documenting the experience of more than 500,000 people of African descent in the borough of the Bronx. Naison's two-pronged teaching philosophy includes drawing upon the insights of other disciplines in his pedagogy, and making what goes on in his classroom relevant to people in the communities that the university is near.



An oral history interview with local DJs and rappers for the Bronx African American History Project.

Photo: Dawn Russell

“You can’t teach history effectively without drawing from other disciplines,” he says. When Naison teaches an African American history course, he assigns novels, plays, and music, and brings in work from anthropology and sociology. He gets his students involved in the neighborhoods adjoining the campus, and he has a policy that high school students and community members can join his classes.

“An engaged university is one where the surrounding communities are part of the educational process that happens on campus, and the campus empowers those communities with the knowledge its scholars acquire. It creates a wonderful synergy and a sense of excitement. People are crossing barriers and interacting with people they might not normally meet, and exploring new possibilities for what they’re going to do in the future.”

The benefit of crossing sectors, from Naison’s perspective, is having scholarship reach a broader audience. In partnership with the Bronx Museum of the Arts and the Bronx County Historical Society, Naison gives lectures, conducts oral history interviews, archives materials, co-sponsors conferences, gives neighborhood tours, and works with designers to produce exhibits.

“Tens of thousands of people see the exhibits, including school kids and church groups. I could have never reached those people! I write an article and maybe a thousand people read it.”

Fordham has also played a presenting role through Naison’s Bronx African American History Project. Recently, the project hosted a benefit with doo-wop artists and jazz musicians from the Bronx that attracted more than 750 people.

Moving forward, Naison is interested in forging more partnerships between universities. “There’s not as much cross-campus collaboration as there should be. In 40 years at Fordham, I’ve had numerous partnerships with community-based organizations, but I’ve never had an organized partnership with scholars at other schools in New York. Maybe this is something IA can pioneer.”

## CALIFORNIA STATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, POMONA

The guiding philosophy at Cal Poly Pomona is “Learn by Doing,” which creates a rich environment for interdisciplinary public scholarship. Assistant Professor Susan Mulley, Department of Landscape Architecture and a 2010 PAGE Fellow, is spearheading projects to address issues of social and environmental justice in Southern California. Her interdisciplinary training in environmental science, history, landscape architecture, rural studies, and land resource science equips her to engage in community problem solving.

“It is the future to do this kind of multi-disciplinary, trans-disciplinary, and interdisciplinary work,” Mulley says. “I think that’s the direction we’re moving in as academics. Interdisciplinary research gives us a better base of knowledge to approach wicked problems—by which I mean complex problems, with no clear or best solution, multiple stakeholders and points of view, with significant implications. This is a concept developed by Rittel and Webber back in 1973. You can use a range of different disciplines to understand these problems and, especially if we’re looking at real world issues, we get better solutions. I became an academic because I wanted to make a difference, both in terms of moving knowledge ahead within my discipline, and in publicly engaged scholarship where change could be created in communities.”

The hurdles in interdisciplinary work, Mulley finds, are recognizing that each discipline has its own modes of inquiry, paradigms, points of view, and even languages. However, it’s the synthesis of these components across disciplines that yield better solutions, as well as the ability to engage more community stakeholders and scholars in the projects. The biggest challenge is the breadth of knowledge that a scholar needs to do this work. Mulley often tells her students that they should leave a graduate program knowing what they don’t know, and being committed to a lifelong learning process of reading and staying up-to-date.

Mulley outlines the guiding principles of her own interdisciplinary work: (1) Listen more than you talk; (2) Let go of perfection, because when you’re working with multiple disciplines as well as with communities, you can’t get caught up in anything being perfect; (3) Start many projects, because a percentage of them may fail; (4) Don’t let interdisciplinary boundaries stop you from trying something new; and (5) Involve students, because the energy of having students working together—especially students from different disciplines—will create change in our disciplines by posing new questions and by moving our thinking forward.

“Students represent our future, and the ability to work across the boundaries of disciplines, and across the barrier between academia and communities will make an enormous difference in how we function as academics and as publicly engaged scholars.”

Earlier this year, Mulley worked with a group of landscape architecture students to create a vision plan for transforming the creek that runs through the city of Escondido, which was channelized in the 1960s to control floods. While the work was done within the discipline, students reached out to other disciplines, such as engineering, for expertise. Students presented the vision to the city council, hosted bike walks, collected data from community meetings, and used research methods from urban planning. Interdisciplinary work has impacted landscape architecture, Mulley says, from spurring growth of new research areas to helping the profession really become an academic discipline.

“The discipline of landscape architecture has been radically changed as a result of recognizing the need for interdisciplinarity and incorporating knowledge from other disciplines. We’re no longer expert-based and merely concerned with aesthetics; we’re now grounded by research and participatory practices, which is a new paradigm for landscape architecture.”

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## Imagining Jamaica

Continued from page 1

IA conference was in 2001, and it was very clear from that experience that the kind of thinking about knowledge making and scholarship that IA was undertaking could enrich policy making and higher education.

**Kevin Bott:** I know that through the Economic Empowerment and Global Learning Project that you founded, students and faculty have used such an integrated approach in a number of communities, including Easton, Pennsylvania [home of Lafayette College], Honduras, and New Orleans. Can you speak more specifically about how the humanities informed those projects?

**FH:** First I want to be clear that when I say “humanities,” I am including the arts and other cultural disciplines. I am speaking about the means by which people are engaged in the discussions and deliberations with the academy on things that impact their lives. For example, in New Orleans, it would be naïve, or worse yet, arrogant, to ask public policy questions about renewal and redevelopment after Hurricane Katrina without considering what, for residents, would constitute desirable organic sustainability in their natural, built, cultural, and economic environments. The legacy of social invisibility among the income-poor residents living in the wards of New Orleans demands that these issues be part of the framing and solution. These residents are going to invest in initiatives to renew and revitalize their communities only if they see an appreciation of their need for agency in the shaping of their communities and in their own lives. But because their voices are not being heard, there’s a presumption that they don’t care about the issues. For example, from a strictly economic perspective, there is the potential for the mistaken belief that the voicelessness of low income residents on environmental matters indicates their lesser interest in environmental stewardship. What we found through public scholarship in New Orleans was that income-poor residents of the lower wards were very much committed to



Gladstone “Fluney” Hutchinson speaking to students during a Black History Month event at Lafayette College.

environmental stewardship. They saw it as absolutely vital to the sustainability of their neighborhoods and their lives. But we were only able to fully appreciate this, not through regression analysis, but through public scholarship projects under the auspices of the IA-related *Home New Orleans?* project. That project involved arts, culture, and the civic engagement initiatives that allowed residents to see themselves as owners of their own experiences. Now, with a sense of agency, they are using our technical support to frame projects around their aspirations, and speaking to funders about building partnership.

I want to say that behind all of our public scholarship work in New Orleans is the spirit and the philosophy of the late Sekou Sundiata’s *51st (Dream) State* project, which IA helped to incubate at member campuses including Lafayette. The work that Imagining America is doing is part of the creation of a new kind of democratic engagement in America, one that is going to have people as the owners of their own experience. The science of economics can never address that. But if you combine economic science with political science with arts and the creative disciplines, and you acknowledge the real expertise of community members, then you have a paradigm that begins to address the

issue of revitalization—economic, cultural, and democratic revitalization. You also have a paradigm that allows academic curriculums to positively contribute to the modernization of democratic practices and civil society.

**KB:** Which seems perfectly aligned with what you’re being asked to do in Jamaica.

**FH:** Kevin, with no shame I will confess that what I am asked to do as director general of economic and social planning in Jamaica—to drive the nation’s long term aspirations of becoming a developed country by 2030—would not be possible without the confidence I developed as a public humanist under the mentorship of IA. Nancy Cantor, Sekou Sundiata, Julie Ellison, David Scobey, Tim Eatman, Jan Cohen-Cruz, to name a few, all invested generously in my public intellectual and humanistic development, and importantly, the power of public scholarship for strengthening civil society. Call it my response to Nancy Cantor’s call for universities to understand the public good they can create. IA gave me the confidence to form productive public scholarship alliances with colleagues from different disciplines at Lafayette, including Ed Kerns in art and David Veshosky in engineering, who have been important partners in the projects in New Orleans and Easton. I sincerely hope



my work in Jamaica can be seen as a pay-back and validation of the legitimacy of the IA public scholarship paradigm.

**KB:** Reading the Jamaican press, it seems that your appointment and the speeches you've given are being very well received.

**FH:** I think that people are receptive to the fact that I am addressing the issues that speak directly to their own needs and aspirations. The question I am asking is how to translate aspirations into outcomes. How can government help to translate those aspirations into reality? Jamaica's development plan, Vision 2030 Jamaica, is totally in the spirit of IA. It is Imagining Jamaica or, better yet, Imagining Global Civil Society. This speaks to the universality of the democratic inclusiveness of IA's vision and mission. Vision 2030 Jamaica was a 4-year project undertaken with the input and buy-in of both political parties in which every religious group, non-governmental groups, and ordinary citizens were asked, "What are your aspirations? How do you imagine yourself and how do you imagine Jamaica?" Emerging from this inclusive process was the clear message that they imagined, for themselves and their country, security and prosperity, as embodied in the National Vision Statement: "Jamaica, the place of choice to live, work, raise families, and do business." And this was the starting point of this very public conversation. This is a model of public scholarship on a national scale and it is important to me that IA appreciates the global reach and transformational powers of its paradigm.

And it is important for me to say, finally, that my experience is proof that IA is not exclusively about the arts and humanities. This message has to be clear. In fact, IA must continue to make the case that its work is about a paradigm shift that includes all disciplines. Essentially, that it is about allowing questions to be explored through a democratic, collaborative process across disciplines, because increasingly, solutions involving public humanness cannot be found within the confines of a single discipline. Hence IA must win the support of non-cultural humanity disciplines and scholars.



Anuradha Ghai (left), Lafayette College lecturer in economics, and Gladstone "Fluney" Hutchinson, led a team of students working with villagers in Lagunitas, Honduras, to reinvent the local economy as a coffee plantation.

As a final thought, the arts and humanities provide vital tools without which we are unable to see the humanity in people's aspirations. As someone trained in the social science of economics, I have the deepest appreciation of the power of understanding this. IA is therefore right in its paradigm and is a bright stream in the future of higher education. Please, therefore, don't stop what you do, because you are so far ahead in society's thinking about how it can become a better, more civil society. ■

*To learn more about Gladstone "Fluney" Hutchinson's work in Jamaica, follow links from our homepage, [www.imaginingamerica.org](http://www.imaginingamerica.org).*

## IA Regional Meetings, Spring 2011

March 2011

### University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee

*Affinity Group Meeting: Health and Cultural Disciplines*

For more information, contact Anne Basting, [basting@uwm.edu](mailto:basting@uwm.edu)

April 2011

### Vanderbilt University

Topic: *PAGE (Publicly Active Graduate Education)*

For more information, contact Ashley Crownover, [ashley.crownover@Vanderbilt.Edu](mailto:ashley.crownover@Vanderbilt.Edu), or Adam Bush, [asbush@gmail.com](mailto:asbush@gmail.com)

If you are interested in hosting a regional meeting, contact Jan Cohen-Cruz, [jcohenr@syr.edu](mailto:jcohenr@syr.edu)

## Save the Date!

Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life  
with  
University of Minnesota  
and  
Macalester College

**Present**  
**the Twelfth Annual Imagining America Conference in**  
**Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota**

**Thursday, September 22 – Saturday September 24, 2011**

Details Forthcoming...

## From the Director

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The question is how to make this tension productive. As the rich diversity of panels at our recent national conference in Seattle evinced, Imagining America is committed to supporting work that is specific to the humanities, arts, and design. It is also committed to cross-disciplinary partnerships that integrate cultural content and methodologies into a range of projects that engage with political economy, environmental sustainability, social history, participatory mapping, and public health, among many other possibilities. Across these two modes of engagement, the value of arts, humanities, and design can be expressed in discipline-specific initiatives or through collaborations across just about any discipline one could imagine.

For me, the centrality of arts and humanities is particularly important since those fields and practices bring one's partners' experiential and historical reality into the foreground. Aspects of a situation that even the most esteemed expert could not know but are common knowledge to people in the situation are the result of what bell hooks calls the authority of experience. The humanities and the arts access such experience, through processes of democratic deliberation and cultural expression. The expert becomes a facilitator who has much to contribute, but who will leave. Those who remain must ultimately feel ownership of the situation and the solution; the cultural disciplines provide processes for that to occur, a point economist Fluney Hutchinson emphasizes in his interview elsewhere in this newsletter.

In "Teaching Interdisciplinarity" (forthcoming in *Pedagogy* 11.3), co-authors Bruce Burgett, Cinnamon Hillyard, Ron Krabill, Sarah Leadley, and Becky Rosenberg provide a useful vocabulary for thinking through these issues. Drawing on the work of Julie Thompson Klein, they name various constructs of interdisciplinarity: "*multi-disciplinary*—comparing and contrasting two or more disciplines; *critical interdisciplinarity*—integrating multiple disciplines

through a critique of disciplinary knowledge formations; *transdisciplinary*—combining the skepticism about disciplinary knowledge production typical of critical interdisciplinarity with a sustained attempt to engage non-academic knowledge-making sectors on and off campus." The authors argue for a version of interdisciplinarity that links a critical investigation of disciplinary knowledge formations to a commitment to cross-sectoral pedagogies and projects that constituents of Imagining America share.

Given the different ways of valuing knowledge across higher education and surrounding communities, how we practice this type of inter- or transdisciplinarity must necessarily take many forms. As many of us public scholar/ practitioners have experienced, concrete situations call upon us to respond to the issues present rather than allowing

*The disciplinary knowledges and methods we bring to this work are never inconsequential, but they are also very seldom sufficient to the complex tasks at hand.*

us simply to apply what we have learned in our disciplines. I, for example, was trained in performance. But on the ground I have needed to know something about the hazards of building on lots wet enough to support willow trees—a piece on community gardens; the pros and cons of community-based museums in neighborhoods with fast-rising rents—a show about gentrification; and the legal recourse of non-US-citizen wives abused by their American spouses, all the more poignant when children are involved—a collaboration with the SU Law School using theatre for community education. I have come to expect community collaborations, where the public and civic purposes of the arts often take shape, to be interdisciplinary or, indeed, transdisciplinary.

Cal Poly Pomona Assistant Professor Susan Mulley, cited in "Bridging Disciplines, Crossing Sectors" in this newsletter, gives an example of language that reflects the

ubiquity of interdisciplinarity in scholarly undertakings. She uses the term "wicked problems"—defining them as "complex problems, with no clear or best solution, multiple stakeholders and points of view, with significant implications. You can use a range of different disciplines to understand these problems and, especially if we're looking at real world issues, we get better solutions." In the same spirit, the NEH provides funding for the exploration of "enduring questions," referring to issues of such magnitude that no discipline can claim them entirely within its boundaries.

Researching the 2007 Curriculum Project (downloadable from our website), an investigation of how the arts are taught in higher education courses emphasizing engagement, one of the strongest messages we received from the 231 survey respondents was the need to integrate engaged scholarship in the service of action. A great many respondents cited the centrality of critical analysis and collaboration infusing disciplinary content in community-based work. In the space of projects, the rigor of disciplinary knowledge meets and is reshaped in response to real situations and non-academic forms of expertise. As one longtime community organizer and cultural consultant noted, community-based artists and their partners must make sure they know enough about the issues with which their work brings them in contact:

*If you're saying you're anti-gentrification, it's really understanding what gentrification means in its complexities. There's a scholarship component about what it is you're trying to change in the world, if it's about social change, and why, and the history of those social movements that give you an analysis. It's learning how to develop an analysis and understanding enough content to be able to do that, so you're not just dropping yourself into campaigns, but you have a theory of social change and you know how to act within it.*

Whether this knowledge is disciplinary or interdisciplinary becomes relatively unimportant in these contexts. As public scholars and artists, we are motivated by issues in the world at large, not strictly as defined by our

disciplinary or interdisciplinary base. Our allegiance is to moving something forward. The disciplinary knowledges and methods we bring to this work are never inconsequential, but they are also very seldom sufficient to the complex tasks at hand.

### **Transdisciplinarity in Practice: The IA Collaboratories Initiative**

IA is committed to supporting the inter- and transdisciplinary work of its members and to building inter-institutional alliances aimed at developing capacities among our membership to engage in cross-sectoral partnerships. Articulating IA's interdisciplinary and trans-local identities evidence that IA membership is not for the benefit of arts, humanities, and design students, faculty, and community partners alone. We encourage ever greater expansion of IA participation to include a whole range of colleagues whose work benefits from and adds value to our joint work. Engaging interdisciplinarity could not be more central for us as an organization that looks to entire campuses rather than strictly individual schools or departments to join.

I am thus pleased to announce a new IA initiative designed to provide opportunities for IA members to work together on specific challenges regularly encountered by our membership. The IA Collaboratories evidence a maturing of IA's purpose. They allow us to produce knowledge together by collaborating across our varied locations, disciplines, and institutions.

The Collaboratories will each consist of several IA Research Fellows from a number of member campuses (including core community partners) focused on one of six areas reflecting longtime IA interests identified below. Project leads will convene teams virtually to shape their research questions and goals. Teams will also determine their use of up to \$5,000 in IA seed money. This funding can be used in many different ways: to support a face-to-face meeting; to pay a research assistant to carry out a preparatory phase of a national project; to buy time to pursue outside funding; to engage an outside expert; etc. Collaboratories will be invited to

present their work-in-progress at the 2011 IA national conference and may apply for an annual renewal of funds for up to three years.

2010-11 Collaboratory themes and facilitators are as follows:

**1. Exploring the creation of an Online IA Journal:** How would it distinguish itself from existing journals, and be structured as concerns peer review and worth to both campus and community? This includes research into related journals and the development of a fund raising proposal. Brian Lonsway: [blonsway@syr.edu](mailto:blonsway@syr.edu), and Kathleen Brandt: [kbrandt@syr.edu](mailto:kbrandt@syr.edu)

**2. What are opportunities and obligations of an Undergraduate Liberal Arts Education** for incorporating civic engagement? How might such work in the arts and humanities help communities and students bridge cultural differences and engage large questions of meaning, ethics, and purpose? Goals may be to plan a pre-conference session at the 2011 IA national meeting in the Twin Cities and develop a collaborative funding proposal to support cross-institutional curriculum and program development. Amy Koritz: [akoritz@drew.edu](mailto:akoritz@drew.edu), and Paul Schadewald: [schadewald@macalester.edu](mailto:schadewald@macalester.edu)

**3. Culture and Community Revitalization** addresses urban revitalization through arts and culture with a strong acknowledgment of cultural memory and heritage. Focus is best practices in an effort to identify models of success of use to academics, policy makers, and community activists. Kendall Phillips: [kphillip@syr.edu](mailto:kphillip@syr.edu), and Ron Bechet: [rbechet@xula.edu](mailto:rbechet@xula.edu)

**4. Public Humanities Centers and Institutes:** How can we assess our work both for our own growth and so that other colleagues, funders, etc., are able to appreciate our mission and accomplishments? What are the range of projects and courses that public humanities centers across the US have found to be most effective? How can public humanities centers across campuses support each other? Gregg Lambert: [glambert@syr.edu](mailto:glambert@syr.edu), and Anne Valk: [anne\\_valk@brown.edu](mailto:anne_valk@brown.edu)

**5. Community-Campus Network of Artists and Scholars:** How can IA help evaluate and disseminate the work of community cultural leaders in partnership with traditional higher education—their tremendous knowledge of traditions, aesthetic forms, of crafting and sustaining organizations, and mobilizing constituencies? How could we use media innovation and accessible technologies to map and translate this work as a dynamic archive for sustained engagement, participation, and reflection by a broad constituency? Randy Martin: [randy.martin@nyu.edu](mailto:randy.martin@nyu.edu), and Kim Yasuda: [yasuda@art.ucsb.edu](mailto:yasuda@art.ucsb.edu)

**6. Integrated Assessment of Public Scholarship:** This team will advance assessment that aims to understand impact on community partners, stakeholders, and issues, and on the higher ed institution, in addition to faculty and students. We will focus on identifying and vetting relevant assessment models, frameworks, and tools, translating findings for the purposes of IA members' interests and needs. Pam Korza: [pkorza@artsusa.org](mailto:pkorza@artsusa.org), and Sylvia Gale: [sgale@richmond.edu](mailto:sgale@richmond.edu)

These six focus areas are not intended to exhaust IA's commitments. Other initiatives include an impact study of the Tenure Team Report; new research on the linkage of diversity, access, and engagement; and ongoing support of graduate education to public ends. For more information about specific IA Collaboratories, contact the project leads. For information about the initiative as a whole, contact me at [jcohen@syr.edu](mailto:jcohen@syr.edu).

*Jan Cohen-Cruz*

Jan Cohen-Cruz

Director, Imagining America



## Keyword: *Interdisciplinary*

**Kevin Bott and Jamie Haft**

Amara Geffen is an artist and professor of art at Allegheny College in Meadville, PA. She is also director of the College's Center for Economic & Environmental Development (CEED), project director of the Arts & Environment Initiative, and chair of the Civic Engagement Council (CEC). Her community-based projects serve as tools for community and economic development, and emphasize creative reuse, repurposing, and community collaboration. Geffen and IA Associate Director Kevin Bott spoke by phone to discuss this edition of the IA newsletter's keyword, *interdisciplinary*.

**Kevin Bott:** Amara, what does interdisciplinary mean to you as an artist?

**Amara Geffen:** Arts training is inherently interdisciplinary. The great masters from Western civilization were interdisciplinary philosophers and poets. Da Vinci is perhaps the most obvious example. To actually generate an artistic work with the potential to resonate in a particular cultural moment requires the artist to be an integrative thinker. Artists must think not only about craft and the technical aspects of making art; if we want our work to have resonance in the world, we must understand vital conversations so we can contribute in meaningful ways.

**KB:** How does artistic training cultivate an interdisciplinary approach to thinking?

**AG:** Being an artist is bolstered and supported by integrative thinking. As a young artist, I studied ceramics and sculpture and learned about ancient cultures: how they were organized and how they developed, and how they made things from clay or bronze for daily use (technology), for ritual (cultural expression), and for the accumulation of wealth (commemoration and connoisseurship). I learned that geology affected technological expression. I learned about kilns and fire technology, which in turn brought me into engineering, combustion, and chemistry.



Photo: Angelo Clotti

Amara Geffen inspects *In Praise of Land and Water*, a land art project in Meadville, Pennsylvania which demonstrates innovative strategies for handling stormwater on federal highways.

I think of art as the most interdisciplinary of disciplines because to master the technical and conceptual skills needed requires a fully interdisciplinary education that includes an understanding not only of form and materials, but science and politics and poetry.... and then some!

**KB:** How does interdisciplinarity inform your pedagogy with student scientists and social scientists at the Center for Economic and Environmental Development?

**AG:** CEED's programs and affiliated majors (environmental science, economics, art) are inherently interdisciplinary. If you're going to study water quality from a social science perspective then social conditions, land use, planning, geography, geology, hydrology, and the politics of place all become vitally important. The goal of our programs is to provide opportunities for students to engage in an academic discipline through integrative, experiential, and/or applied learning. We use approaches to public scholarship, place-based research, and civic engagement that provide students with a deeper understanding of how discipline-specific issues relate to the larger life-world.

**KB:** I understand the value of someone from environmental science weighing in on a water quality issue, but what's the value of an artist on such an interdisciplinary team?

**AG:** Artists think holistically, which is the basis for getting at beauty and stimulating awareness of an aesthetic sensibility. When I participate on an interdisciplinary team my initial goal, once I understand the scope of the project, is to get the team to consider new approaches that integrate divergent strategies. While undertaken by collaborative teams, land use planning projects tend to unfold in a fragmented way. The engineers do one thing, the landscapers do another, and the planners do something else. I work to bring the team together, to integrate the ideas from the beginning so we can arrive at the most holistic and effective solution possible. For example, in a recent project, *In Praise of Land & Water: Revisioning Stormwater along Federal Highways*, I was able to bring a team together to work with the PA Department of Transportation to explore whether cloverleaves could be developed into aesthetic filtration systems. We envisioned a completely different way to handle stormwater on federal highways, a system that merged best practices in land art with best practices in stormwater management. The result was a human-made system functioning like a wetland that helps purify water and also makes that water visible. The project also demonstrated creative reuse: the concrete from the old bridge deck was recycled to create the stormwater system rather than being land filled. Most artists are integrative thinkers. We understand how to connect dialogues and, often, we open spaces where conversations are stimulated and can resonate forward into our shared futures. Artists bring people together, providing new ways of looking at things and utilizing interdisciplinary, holistic world view/perspectives.

**KB:** On the other side of the equation, how does your involvement in such a project impact or inform your own artistic practice?

**AG:** My ideas about my individual artistic practice have changed as a result of doing this work. I no longer work alone in my studio; instead I work collaboratively.

My studio is now the community, and my materials are the streets and landforms in that community. I find inspiration in other artists who have worked on the edge of what we normally think of as art, especially those who see the potential for their work to stimulate change or bring awareness to critical issues. I'm influenced by Joseph Beuys and the concept of social sculpture. I have come to understand that my art and my pedagogy are interconnected. What I'm doing is not about discrete objects that can be presented in a museum, or that can be collected or purchased. My art functions in relevant ways in the art world and in the world beyond the art world, yet operates on the edges of what we normally consider Art.

**KB:** What's your sense of the state of interdisciplinary work at Allegheny and nationally?

**AG:** Allegheny is in the process of strategic planning. We're asking: Do we provide enough support for interdisciplinarity to thrive? Do we provide the kind of support that allows the best possible connections between the academic curriculum and the co-curriculum, between academic affairs and student affairs? Changing faculty and departmental culture and perspectives around public scholarship, applied research, and experiential learning are central parts of this dialogue. In the 29 years I've been at Allegheny, I've witnessed substantial change and increasing acceptance of interdisciplinarity. Of course, there's still much more to aspire toward to create more permeability in our departmental structures and to be clear about the role of this work in the curriculum. Through intentional creative conversations, both at Allegheny and nationally, we're going through the process of figuring out how to create programs that look at knowledge through the lenses of interdisciplinarity and integrative thinking. At the same time, we're educating people by engaging in these very questions. Institutional change comes slowly, but we'll get there through measured and intentional conversations until enough people—faculty, students, administrators, and funders—understand. That's what a tipping point is all about, right? ■

## Bridging Disciplines

Continued from page 3

Efforts to support campus-wide interdisciplinary public scholarship are underway. Recently, Mulley co-founded the California Center for Land and Water Stewardship. With the support and leadership of Carol Richardson, dean of the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences, an Imagining America group of faculty from various disciplines was also established. Richardson meets with faculty from the performing arts, history, geography, sociology, design, and more, to develop new projects and nurture this growing body of interdisciplinary public scholarship at Cal Poly Pomona.

## UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

Director of Research Initiatives in Arts and Humanities and IA Consortium co-representative Jane Slaughter collaborates with faculty members from various disciplines to conceptualize interdisciplinary projects and pursue funding from national granting agencies. Classically trained in history, she contributes to women's studies, European studies, peace studies, and more. And with 30 years of interdisciplinary experience at UNM, she's comfortable being the lone humanist among a group of scientists.

"The changing demands of our world make it more and more important for scholars to try to go beyond their own areas," Slaughter says. "What I have seen with the younger generation is recognition that the kinds of questions that their disciplines are posing invite them to move outside of disciplinary boundaries, whether to examine social or political issues, or to look for other ways of understanding the human experience."

The benefits of interdisciplinary work, she says, include approaching research in ways that challenge one's own disciplinary training, using different kinds of sources, and even finding new ways to put together materials. Communicating across disciplines is the major challenge. Last year, Slaughter worked with 18 faculty members to develop goals for a broad-based arts and humanities

research and teaching institute to support interdisciplinary public scholarship projects at UNM. She tried to help faculty members make linkages so they could see how the institute would be relevant to their own disciplinary work.

"You have to encourage people, and encourage yourself, not to hold too tightly to the way things have been done before, and to be willing to go into new territory."

Five different deans at UNM committed their support to the interdisciplinary institute, which will engage campus and community partners statewide. Faculty in Albuquerque will collaborate with smaller educational institutions in New Mexico, including UNM's branch campuses and surrounding communities, such as Los Alamos.

Another interdisciplinary project at UNM connects humanities and sciences, and recently received funding from the NSF. Johann van Reenen, associate dean for Research, Science, and International Initiatives, instigated the project with Slaughter to explore new ways to access and store information using digital technologies. The project's goal is to create centers of learning in the libraries, where scholars from different disciplines can get trained in the acquisition, creation, and dissemination of data. The vehicle for creating the library resources will be an interdisciplinary course for undergraduate and graduate students entitled "Women, Water, and Work," which will be co-taught by four women from the departments of history, American studies, earth and planetary sciences, and civil engineering.

"We have so much information in terms of how women's use of water connects to labor, from early times to the present, when issues about New Mexico's water use are at the fore," Slaughter says. "We're excited to bring humanities together with sciences because we look so differently at fundamental things. For example: What constitutes scientific truth?"

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PAGE ON PAGE

## Live Your Truth

Adam Bush

*We are pleased to present the first PAGE report by our new PAGE Director.*

Since its inception in 2003, PAGE has grown in exciting ways. What started as a half-day pre-conference fellowship program became a full-day “Summit” through which PAGE Fellows convene to discuss their own work as well as the broader possibilities for civic engagement. Beginning in 2009, recognizing that the narrow participation afforded through the fellowship program limited the scope of the conversation, the PAGE Summit became a discussion open to all graduate students and early-career scholars. These acts of expansion, as well as the inclusion of participants outside of the arts, humanities, and design, have brought new conversations to the forefront of the PAGE program. We now reflect upon the conflicting definitions of “publics” (and scholarship) as we talk through how different disciplines, programs, and universities create space for engaged work. Such discussions are messy but exciting, especially when they revolve around the urgency for access, inclusion, and social justice in higher education, as they did in Seattle. What emerges is the possibility for new, trans-disciplinary, and sustainable collaborations both within and beyond the walls of the academy.

Participatory action research, activism, community-based work, and civic engagement all have long histories within (and beyond) the academy. There are times when the needs of our political commitments or of our research are in conflict with our institution—a sentiment that echoes George Sanchez’s 2004 Dewey Lecture, *Crossing Figueroa*. Instead of seeing this as a hindrance to our work, our position in the academy should ground engagement. Shirley Suet-ling Tang writes in Charles Hale’s collection of essays, *Engaging Contradictions*, “the work becomes even more powerful if

also connected to a radical examination of academic privilege and standards—including what kind of ‘knowledge’ is being valued and what is not” (p. 257). Participants at the Summit discussed how important it is within graduate training to overcome contradictions between higher education and community-based approaches and values. Contexts for doing so include mentorship, peer-support (with perhaps a redefinition of who is a peer), and an examination of a “continuum of scholarship” that allows for multiple projects and products. Throughout the PAGE Summit there was an insistence that we must work to transform the university while we are there, challenging institutional politics even as we use our projects to talk about reciprocal and productive community partnerships.

In speaking “against the romance of community” (to borrow the title from Miranda Joseph’s book), discussions among this year’s PAGE cohort reflected the inherent complexities of community-building *within* the university. As PAGE Fellow Bridget Draxler wrote on her HASTAC blog summary of the conference, the Summit gave her the space to grapple with productive frustration:

I was given the opportunity to talk with an amazing collection of graduate students from myriad disciplines. We discovered that some of us are encouraged or expected by our departments to do public work, while some of us fight to do this work; some of us do public scholarship in frustration with social injustices, while some of us pursue it for the joy of community engagement; some of us have rich backgrounds in engagement but are new to academia, while some of us have been in school all our lives and are looking for a window to the outside world. These differences had the potential to produce uncomfortable tensions, or even alienating differences of experience... as a group, we developed a rich, complicated relationship that frustrated in ways that ultimately helped us to grow.

At the core of much of our discussion in Seattle was seeing engaged work as a project grounded in academic labor or a necessity driven by one’s experience or values. In a breakfast conversation moderated by Professors George Sanchez and Matthew Countryman, and in the subsequent PAGE panel discussion which featured PAGE Fellows Amaka Okechukwu (New York University), Damien Schnyder (University of California, Santa Barbara), and Monica Pelayo (University of Southern California), participants discussed the purpose and function of their art and scholarship. For many, their work is driven by their community and organizational commitments and by the responsibility, as one panelist expressed it, to see their “PhD not as an individual thing I have, but as a community’s degree.”

“Live your truth,” Laura Pulido states in Hale’s *Engaging Contradictions*, addressing students struggling to find the balance between their political commitments and their research practice (p. 362). As Charles Hale notes in his introduction, “You do not have to choose between your deepest ethical, political commitments and your desire to become a scholar. If this combination is your truth, then live it, knowing that the path will be difficult but rewarding, that others ... have your back”(p. 26).

The “we” who ostensibly “have your back” is important to examine. The “public” of public scholarship is questioned in IA but the “we” is equally germane, for “we” are a part of that public—whether in our university, in our communities, or in IA. Sekou Sundiata, a visionary artist and former IA national advisory board member, implored us in his *51st (Dream) State* to “create a We/Ours out of I/Me/Mine in moving towards gatherings of good conscience, honest critique, and common purpose... [as] both an example and a promotion of a useful democratic practice.” I cannot sum up the potential for just and democratic work imbued within this year’s PAGE-related panels, workshops, and working breakfasts any better than that. ■



## Bridging Disciplines

Continued from page 9

As for the impact of interdisciplinary work at UNM, Slaughter notes, the scholarship can be of use in solving community problems in New Mexico. For example, faculty plan to explore a humanities-related theme, “Security and Insecurity,” in partnership with community organizations looking to bridge a rift between high school students in Los Alamos, a city on a high ridge, and the city of Espanola in the valley.

“I think this is a different kind of impact than we have had traditionally. The scholarship impacts the communities, but the communities also make an incredible impact on the scholarship. Community collaborators can expand projects in new and exciting ways unforeseen by faculty and students. It’s exciting.”

### NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

A land-grant institution historically recognized for its science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, NCSU’s public scholars are engaged in bold interdisciplinary projects emerging from the College of Design and College of Humanities and Social Sciences, respectively. Celen Pasalar (design), and IA Consortium co-representative David Zonderman (history), are interested in documenting and bringing to scale existing public scholarship efforts.

Pasalar is the assistant dean for Research and Extension and director of the Downtown Design Studio in the College of Design. She is an architect and urban design researcher with expertise in sustainable community design, currently exploring issues in city growth and sustainable development.

“The emerging issues in our societies and as related to the physical environment require cross-disciplinary collaboration,” Pasalar says. “All of these important social questions, in my opinion, can no longer be adequately addressed within a single discipline itself.”



Photo: Sarah Blackmon

A state fair exhibit of NCSU’s large-scale, interdisciplinary initiative, The North Carolina Language and Life Project, that focuses on research and outreach programs related to language in the American South.

According to Pasalar, the issue of healthy communities, for example, is not only about physical structure, but also social, political, and economic dynamics. The College of Design utilizes its in-house expertise in urban design, community design and planning, architecture, landscape architecture, graphic design, art and design, and industrial design, as well as collaborating across campus and in the community with those from public health, engineering, ecology, education, social sciences, and the humanities. The result is more creative and positive solutions to respond to community needs.

“Teaming together provides more detailed and extensive solutions for communities. We can integrate data, methodologies, approaches, and concepts from different disciplines in order to advance our understanding of community issues and discover solutions.”

Recently, Pasalar led a historic neighborhood revitalization effort. Community members were initially concerned that their identity and values would not be preserved in the revitalization. In response to this concern, Pasalar collaborated with the linguistics program to facilitate an oral history process to engage community members, and that process informed the design.

“The facilitators from linguistics were able to provide the methodologies and resources from their own discipline, and we were able to merge that and extract what we needed for the design process. Sharing methodologies and communicating across disciplines are what I would consider the pluses in these collaborations.”

The impact of the interdisciplinary approach on the College of Design has fostered the development of new programs to support faculty development, curricular transformation, and new partnerships on campus, in the surrounding communities, and with other colleges in the state. “A design education should prepare its graduates to contribute to the needs emerging in the profession and in the current social and environmental challenges in communities,” she says.

Pasalar describes the key lessons for interdisciplinary work as follows: (1) Recognize each discipline’s strengths and weaknesses; (2) Plan for the project, including leadership (*Who will conduct which phases?*), communication (*How will information be shared?*), and dissemination (*How will we format the deliverables?*); (3) Create an effective process that emphasizes listening; and (4) Document

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## Imagining America's National Study on Pathways for Publicly Engaged Scholars (PES)

**Wendy Nastasi and Staci Weber**

*(Wendy, our new Central New York PAGE Director, and Staci, a fellow graduate student at Syracuse University, School of Education, are both members of the PES Research Team.)*

### FRAMEWORK OF STUDY

In fall 2009, Imagining America proposed a research study to investigate the aspirations and decisions of graduate students and early career scholars involved in the Publicly Active Graduate Education (PAGE) program. The purpose of the study was twofold: to assess the benefits of the PAGE program, and to address a recommendation of the 2008 Tenure Team Initiative report (TTI), which states that universities should “support publicly engaged graduate students and junior faculty.” The ongoing study employs a mixed-method design (online survey and structured telephone interviews) to explore the varied career arcs of publicly engaged scholars. Please note that the research team uses the word “scholar” to include graduate students, academic faculty, artists, and practitioners in the community and the academy.

### SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

In order to participate in the online questionnaire and interview, prospective respondents had to identify (1) as graduate students or early-career scholars/practitioners (“early-career” having been loosely defined as up to five years beyond graduate school completion) and (2) as publicly engaged scholars. Three hundred eighty-three people responded to the survey, and the research team conducted 56 telephone interviews. Telephone interviewees were selected at random from among those survey respondents who indicated their willingness to be interviewed. Two interviews were unusable, one due to poor voice/recording quality, and one because the interviewee did not meet the aforementioned criteria.

Thirty-three percent of survey respondents identified as male, 63% as female, and 5% as “other” or preferred not to answer. Of the fifty-four phone interview participants, 40% identified as male, 58% as female, and 2% preferred not to answer. Approximately 75% of the survey respondents identified as White (non-Hispanic), while the rest of the demographic makeup broke down as follows: 9% Black or African American; 5% Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander; 3% Puerto Rican; 3% Mexican or Mexican American; 3% Other Hispanic or Latino; 3% multiracial; and 2% American Indian or other Native American. Six per cent of the respondents identified as “other,” and 4% declined to answer the question. Seventy-five per cent of telephone interviewees identified as White (non-Hispanic). The remaining 25% included: 9% Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander; 6% Other Hispanic or Latino; 6% “Other;” and, 4% Black or African American.

### QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The telephone interviews lasted between 20 and 60 minutes. Interviews were transcribed and independently verified by a second investigator for accuracy. Researchers coded the data using Atlas.ti software. Through grounded analysis and a series of in-depth conversations and code comparisons, several themes have and continue to emerge from the data. Additionally, the research team developed seven profiles to convey the different pathways publicly engaged scholars may take throughout the early stages of their career.

### EMERGING THEMES

1. *Mentorship.* Interview participants detailed the importance of mentors who either introduced them to publicly engaged scholarship or supported them on a path of engaged scholarship. Many scholars referenced a single person who had a permanent effect on their scholarship and career trajectory.

2. *Bridging Worlds.* Interview respondents described the desire to bridge different aspects, values, and parts of their lives as motivation for undertaking engaged scholarship.

3. *Sphere of Commitment.* This theme captured the importance of both engaging in the local community and the historical context and relationships between an institution and its local community. The latter could positively or negatively impact publicly engaged work.

4. *Institutional Recognition.* Tenure-tracked publicly engaged scholars noted their institutional support. Many commented that their institution’s commitment to public scholarship would be partial until recognized during the tenure and promotion process.

5. *Creativity and Flexibility.* Interviewees enjoyed practicing public scholarship and noted that it allowed for both creativity and flexibility, both positive qualities.

6. *Motivation.* While various extrinsic and intrinsic motivations inspired public scholars, recurring motivations included the benefits of using public scholarship as a form of pedagogy, personal and familial motivation, and a natural, innate, assumed motivation of connecting scholarship and service.

### PROFILE TYPES

The research team established seven profiles of publicly engaged scholars, which helped synthesize findings and capture the importance of the whole person within the research. These profiles are defined as follows:

1. *Cradle to Community.* This profile type exemplifies a scholar who gets involved with her local community because of personal values (i.e. religious, familial). Her involvement with the community leads to the pursuit of graduate work.

2. *Artist as Engaged Scholar.* This profile describes a local artist who uses the community as a “canvas.” The artist as engaged scholar grounds herself in both the academy and the arts.

3. *Teacher to Engaged Scholar*. This profile represents the K-12 teacher who enters the academy for graduate work and teaching, but stays committed to taking an active research role within secondary schools.

4. *Program Coordinator to Engaged Administrator/Scholar*. This profile depicts an administrator in higher education who holds a leadership role in a center, an institute, or a consortium while also holding a faculty position.

5. *Engaged Interdisciplinary*. This profile depicts a scholar who does not identify himself with one specific discipline, but rather takes an interdisciplinary approach to his work.

6. *Activist to Scholar*. This profile captures the community activist who connects with the university and uses the university as a platform to further pursue her activist commitments.

7. *Pragmatist*. This public scholar focuses his efforts on change and transformation. He may be only loosely tied to the academy, if at all.

## NEXT STEPS

As the research team continues to analyze both the qualitative and the quantitative data, applications for these findings have already become apparent. First, stakeholders in engaged scholarship must formalize ways to connect seasoned public scholars with emerging or early career scholars interested in publicly engaged work. Also, paralleling the TTI report, colleges and universities that value publicly engaged scholarship must reflect their commitment through systems of reward. Similarly, public scholars should receive administrative support and time to practice publicly engaged work as a form of pedagogy. Interview participants noted that undergraduate students engaged in public scholarship produced better quality work than undergraduates taught through more traditional means. The research team will compile its findings and recommendations in a report expected to come out at the end of the 2010-11 academic year. Similarly, the team will continue to facilitate presentations

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on the research at national conferences and workshops.

The data seem to evidence a shift in scholarly motivation and concepts of knowledge formation in many emerging scholars. We believe that the changing nature of emerging scholars' self-identified roles as researchers

and community actors suggests the need for academic leaders to adapt. The turn toward public scholarship among many graduate students and early-career scholars signals a paradigm shift that supports future research on this topic. ■

## 2010 Conference Report

**Kevin Bott**

From September 23 – 25, IA convened its national conference in Seattle, Washington, an event co-hosted by the University of Washington's Seattle and Bothell campuses. In this report I'll focus on the structure of the 2010 conference. Certain changes and additions to the format provided frameworks for deeper and more substantive conversations, and created opportunities for broader participation, both by academically affiliated attendees and community partners. I'll share some observations and feedback on these innovations, and close by signaling our broad direction moving forward.

### Overall Expansion

This year we added a pre-conference session on Assessing the Practices of Public Scholarship (APPS). Led by national advisory board APPS co-investigators Pam Korza and Sylvia Gale, with support from staffer Jamie Haft, the day-long session featured John Saltmarsh, director of the New England Resource Center for Higher Education. The pre-conference was an outgrowth of the work a number of members have been doing on the topic since we launched APPS at the 2009 conference in New Orleans. We plan to continue to include preconference convenings in the future, building on the Collaboratories. (*See the Director's column.*)

Thursday, the first day of the conference, was full of workshops and panels, with well over 200 attendees participating in three sets of concurrent sessions and the full-day PAGE Summit for graduate students and early-career scholars. Thursday concluded with an impressive plenary session featuring: Syracuse University Chancellor Nancy Cantor; senior vice president of AAC&U Caryn McTighe Musil, who oversees the office of Diversity, Equity, and Global Initiatives; and David Maurrasse, founder and executive director of Marga Incorporated, a consulting firm dedicated to facilitating partners across sectors to tackle real-world issues. Chancellor Cantor's remarks are posted on IA's website. Among themes identified as core to



Photo: Angelica Macklin

Participants gather for the "Community Media as Participatory Arts Practice" site visit hosted by Jack Straw Productions and 911 Seattle Media Arts Center.

our joint work is the link between engagement and diversity.

### Rise of the Seminar

The Seattle planning committee—a mix of local and national consortium members co-chaired by UW's Bruce Burgett and Miriam Bartha—considered the seminar, a heretofore underutilized format at IA conferences, to be a promising way to convene people in extended, and perhaps more substantive, conversations around topics of concern. Seven seminars were organized for the Seattle conference, each comprised of no more than twenty participants who had all applied to participate, and who had prepared in advance. The goals of the seminar leaders varied. Some hoped that the session would be the culmination of a sharing of intellectual and practical resources, while others were explicit in wanting to extend the conversation beyond the conference itself. Of the latter, at least two groups are continuing to communicate by e-mail or a Wiki page, while a third is actively working on a collaborative book project.

The format also provided a home for conversations linking arts, humanities, and design to the hard and social sciences. The seminars on health, the environment, and feminism in the Americas drew participants from across disciplines and sectors.

Overall, the seminar format was a successful addition to the conference, but not without complications. Some conference attendees were disappointed that the sessions were "closed" to all but those who had applied and prepared in advance. Decisions regarding participation were ultimately left to the discretion of the organizers, but while leaving the sessions closed proved frustrating and confusing to those left out, opening them rankled those who felt that the intended focus was diffused by those who were new to the conversation.

Participants have since offered a number of valuable suggestions moving forward. First, we will consider extending the seminar sessions beyond the standard 90 minutes allotted to other formats. Second, we will structure seminars to encourage pre-conference preparation, while also providing day-of access for those willing to audit. A combination of a lengthier timeframe and a flexible approach to participation may allow for wider access without diluting what should be in-depth conversations.

### Site Visits

Since 2008, IA has convened one day of the conference at local sites of cultural engagement. The long history of campus-community partnerships at UW provided the impetus not only to convene in these spaces but to

actually experience the art and scholarship undertaken there. Nine three-hour site visits were conducted on and around the Seattle and Bothell campuses and beyond, each facilitated by the scholars, artists, and community partners doing the work.

The responsibility of organizing all of these site visits fell to the UW team, who performed many large and small administrative miracles. But not everything that was communicated to the visit organizers was realized in practice. For example, the organizers were asked to talk about their work and, importantly, to provide participants with an experience of it. The most successful sessions provided overviews of the work before engaging participants in hands-on projects akin to the sites' actual activities, followed by discussion. The most disappointing visits found facilitators providing little if any time for activities or conversation. While the structural change was an important step forward, we recognize the need to work more closely with site organizers to ensure alignment with IA's values and goals, especially participation and dialogue.

### **Moving Forward**

Having spent the better part of the past year planning the Seattle conference, I was happy with what I considered, overall, a powerful and thought-provoking gathering. Still, it's impossible not to note ongoing challenges, many of which were communicated back to us through conference evaluations. I'm encouraged that conference participants' sense of what is working as well as aspects that need to be pushed forward is shared by IA staff and the national advisory board. As a consortium we are in broad agreement that the art and scholarship of engagement manifested through campus-community partnerships is vitally linked to questions of access, equity, and diversity. Our shared aspiration for the national conference asks us to fully address the implications of this central premise—for all stakeholders—in ways both pragmatic and profound. Plans for actualizing this aspiration will be the topic of my spring newsletter column. ■

## **Bridging Disciplines**

**Continued from page 11**

the process and project. "Documentation is very important. In my opinion, we are not yet telling our stories effectively, and sharing our successes and failures in terms of our practice."

David Zonderman is a professor and associate department head of history in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, the largest unit on campus in terms of graduating undergraduate students. With academic training in American studies, and expertise in labor history, museum studies, and the history of nonprofits in the US, Zonderman makes connections on a continuum of scales.

"As a teacher and scholar, I love interdisciplinary teaching," Zonderman says. He recently developed a course with a colleague in English on history and literature in 19th century America. "It's the kind of course that was taught 50 years ago and went out of favor, but we both saw a need to resurrect it. The literature students don't have much history context, and the history students don't seem to read much literature. We had fun teaching it. At the end, students said it was interesting to watch two professors from different disciplines go at the same texts and questions in different ways, and to see us demonstrate how the disciplines can talk to each other in addressing problems."

Zonderman has found ways to institutionalize and sustain community engagement as "threaded service-learning." His course on the history of nonprofits in the US is a required course for over 100 students in the minor in nonprofit studies. Another project on labor issues in North Carolina spans ten years: Zonderman collaborates with scholars in labor history to advise a coalition of unions and to research the implications of a 1959 law that bans all public workers from collective bargaining.

Additionally, Zonderman finds himself in interdisciplinary teams when working in local museums. He teaches in the master's program in public history, which trains students for careers outside of the academy in museums, archives, historical sites, and libraries.

"I'm often working in collaborative and interdisciplinary teams with a designer or architect on museum exhibit design. I'm not doing the design, I'm doing the research. This is one of the things I love most about my work in museums: that challenge of how to take historical knowledge and shape it into a physical exhibit. To work with a talented designer and watch him or her physically conceptualize what I'm intellectually conceptualizing is really exciting."

The challenges in interdisciplinary work can be pragmatic: Zonderman recognizes that while interdisciplinary questions are naturally emerging in faculty members' research, the university is still catching up to the mechanics. Still, he is cautious about the way in which such programs are institutionalized: "The very word interdisciplinary comes from the disciplines. Usually, although not always, the best interdisciplinary projects come out of people with disciplinary knowledge first. They grow from a bottom-up, grassroots process out of the disciplines and departments."

For the future, Zonderman plans to draw on NCSU's assets, such as its location in the state capitol, and utilize existing structures within the university, to increase the impact of public scholarship efforts. ■





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Brown University  
California Institute of the Arts  
California State Polytechnic University,  
Pomona  
Carleton College  
Clark University  
Colgate University  
Columbia College Chicago  
Columbia University  
Cornell University  
Dartmouth College  
Dominican University  
Drew University  
Emerson College  
Emory University  
Fordham University  
Grand Rapids Community College  
Hamilton College  
Hampshire College  
Kennesaw State University  
Lafayette College

Loyola University New Orleans  
Macalester College  
Marlboro College  
Maryland Institute College of Art  
Massachusetts College of Art and  
Design  
Michigan State University  
Missouri State University  
Nassau Community College  
New York University  
Northeastern University  
North Carolina State University  
Occidental College  
Ohio State University  
Oklahoma State University  
Pennsylvania State University  
Portland State University  
Princeton University  
Purdue University  
Regis University  
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute  
Richland College  
Southern Oregon University  
Stonehill College  
SUNY Fredonia  
Swarthmore College  
Syracuse University  
Tulane University  
University at Buffalo, SUNY

University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa  
University of California, Davis  
University of California, Los Angeles  
University of California, Santa Barbara  
University of Delaware  
University of Florida  
University of Illinois at Urbana-  
Champaign  
University of Kansas  
University of Iowa  
University of Miami  
University of Michigan  
University of Minnesota  
University of New Mexico  
University of Notre Dame  
University of Oregon  
University of Pennsylvania  
University of Southern California  
University of Texas at San Antonio  
University of Washington, Bothell  
University of Washington, Seattle  
University of Wisconsin, Madison  
University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee  
Vanderbilt University  
Virginia Tech  
Wagner College  
Wesleyan University  
Western Kentucky University  
Winona State University  
Xavier University of Louisiana

